

The President's Daily Brief

25 May 1972

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THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

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PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

On *Page 1* we discuss the military situation in South Vietnam and some signs that the Communists may be losing their earlier optimism.

☐ Iraq ☐
Soviet ☐ (Page 3)

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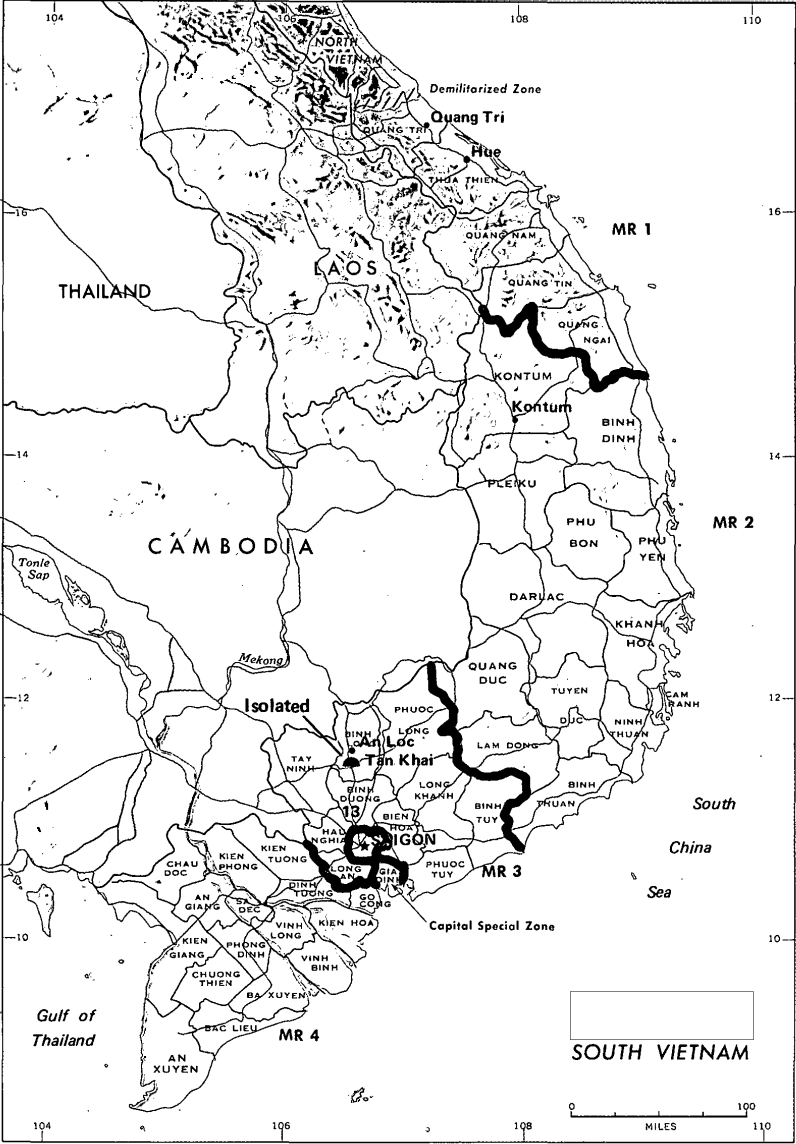
☐ Pakistan ☐
Chinese ☐ (Page 4)

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Announcement that Bangladesh intends to begin war crimes trials in July could disrupt plans for the Indo-Pakistani summit meetings. (Page 5)

Efforts to find a compromise solution to the impasse between the UK and Rhodesia have been dealt a heavy blow. (Page 6)

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VIETNAM

The three battalions of South Vietnamese marines operating behind enemy lines in Quang Tri Province since 23 May have caused heavy Communist losses in troops, equipment, and foodstuffs. The South Vietnamese are now moving back toward friendly lines.

Intercepted Communist messages reveal that allied air strikes and the hot weather in Quang Tri are causing increasing morale problems among Communist units there. One message characterizes the strikes as "terrible" and reports having "difficulties" in keeping units up to strength.

The South Vietnamese units that had been making perceptible progress toward the relief of An Loc in recent days are now encountering stiffened enemy resistance. One government strongpoint along the relief route is said to have been isolated by the Communists, while sharp clashes just south of An Loc have stopped the lead elements of the relief force.

The main Communist headquarters in southern South Vietnam has been forced to admit to its cadres that the "desperate" South Vietnamese defense of An Loc and South Vietnamese counterattacks in the north have disrupted Communist plans

however the Communists still intend to capture An Loc and to defeat the South Vietnamese units attempting to relieve the town.

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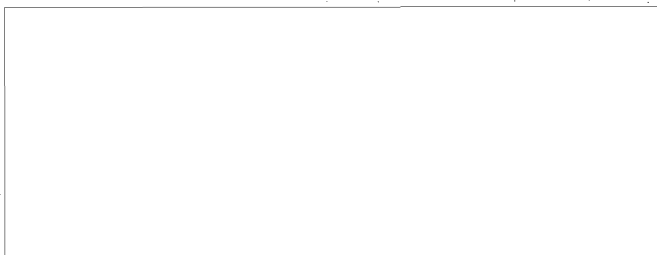
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PAKISTAN-CHINA



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SOUTH ASIA

Bangladesh has announced that it intends to begin war crimes trials in July. The Bangladesh home minister said that investigations of some 100 Pakistani Army officers had been completed and that other investigations are under way.

India has said that it is willing to give the Dacca government custody of prisoners against whom there are well-documented cases. President Bhutto, on the other hand, has publicly emphasized that if any prisoners are turned over to Dacca for trial, the prospects for his summit talks with Prime Minister Gandhi, now expected to begin late in June, would be seriously jeopardized. The Indians may stall in announcing specific plans for handing over prisoners to Bangladesh in hopes of avoiding a Pakistani cancellation of the meeting.

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UK-RHODESIA

The Pearce Commission that has been looking into the acceptability of the UK-Rhodesian agreement concluded last November has decided that the people of Rhodesia "as a whole" reject the accord.

The commission's negative finding apparently puts an end to the efforts of London and Salisbury to reach a face-saving compromise. Rhodesian Prime Minister Smith has denounced the report but London has reluctantly accepted its conclusion. Foreign Secretary Douglas-Home told Parliament that the UK would continue its economic sanctions against Rhodesia. Prime Minister Heath, however, can expect opposition from many in his own party when authorization for the sanctions comes up for renewal this fall.

Black African leaders have reacted favorably to the report and some African states may now press for a meeting of the UN Security Council on Rhodesia in an effort to increase pressure on the Smith government.

The Rhodesian Government shows no interest in negotiating further. The ruling Rhodesian Front Party will move to place tighter controls on blacks. Salisbury is also likely to resume the piecemeal eviction of Africans from white-designated lands and ban, or sharply restrict, the activities of the African National Congress, which led the fight against the settlement during the Pearce Commission hearings.

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